

# Fire Management

A photograph of a forest fire. In the foreground, bright orange and yellow flames are consuming dry brush and the base of a tree on the left. The fire spreads across the ground, with another distinct fire burning at the base of a tree on the right. The background is filled with tall, thin trees, some of which are partially obscured by a thick layer of white smoke or mist rising from the fire. The overall scene is dramatic and illustrates the impact of fire in a forest environment.

Fort Bragg  
North Carolina

# The history of fire on the Landscape



The Fort Bragg Reservation is one of the last areas in the Southeastern United States where the Longleaf Pine Ecosystem still dominates the landscape. The Longleaf Pine and its unique ecosystem previously covered 92 million acres from Virginia to Texas. Today, less than three percent remains. It is an ecosystem that thrives on fire. Longleaf Pine and Wiregrass will not survive and grow without the presence of low-intensity fires. Proper fire management by the Fort Bragg's Forestry Branch supports the Longleaf Pine/Wiregrass and numerous other species that have disappeared from other similar areas that do not implement a viable prescribed burning program.

A well managed program also prevents catastrophic wildfires such as the 90,000 acre fire the swept across the installation in March of 1925. This devastating fire destroyed historical structures and annihilated the mature Longleaf Pine forests across the installation. Prescribed burning sometimes referred to as controlled burning, is an essential function of Fort Bragg's Fire Management Program.





# Prescribed Burning



## What is Prescribed Burn?

A prescribed burn is a controlled fire in which trained professionals burn forest fuels and underbrush to prevent catastrophic wildfires. It also promotes the growth of natural vegetation and enhances wildlife habitat. Fort Bragg's Prescribed Burning Program consists of two seasonal windows: dormant-season (winter burns) and growing-season (spring burns).



The prescribed burning is conducted on a three-year cycle, meaning one third of the reservation (approximately 62,000 acres) is burned every year.



## Dormant-Season Burning:

Dormant-Season burns are mainly fuel reduction burns that are performed during the winter months of January and February. This type of low-intensity burn consists of approximately 25 percent of the total acreage burned annually on the installation. Benefits derived from Dormant-Season burns include:

- ♦ Prevention and control of damaging wildfires.
- ♦ Prevention of Brown Spot Disease in young longleaf pines.
- ♦ Production of vegetation and habitat for wildlife species.
- ♦ Removes forest litter to promote natural reforestation.
- ♦ Controls Kudzu, Brown Nap Weed and other invasive plant species.
- ♦ Preparation of area (site prep) for mechanical reforestation.

## Growing Season Burning:

Growing-Season burns, also known as Ecological Burns, are done mainly to improve critical species habitat. This category of burning is of a higher-intensity and consists of approximately 75 percent of the total acreage burned by Fort Bragg's Forestry Branch annually. These burns run from mid-April until the end of June. Benefits of Growing-Season burns include:

- ◆ Improvement and maintenance of the Longleaf Pine ecosystem, by reducing competition and promoting natural regeneration.
- ◆ Keeps forest healthy and controls underbrush growth.
- ◆ Reduces forest fuels to prevent catastrophic wildfires.
- ◆ Enhances the habitat of many wildlife species such as Eastern Blue-birds, Wild Turkey, Bobwhite Quail, Cottontail Rabbits, White Tail Deer, Eastern Fox Squirrels, and Northern Pine Snakes .
- ◆ Restores the habitat of endangered species such as the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Rough-leaved Loosestrife, American Chaffseed, Michaux Sumac, Saint Francis' Satyr Butterfly.
- ◆ Controls the infestation of disease borne insects such as Deer Ticks.





# Smoke Management



Smoke Management is more than just a consideration, it is a responsibility to the health and safety of both Soldiers and civilians. Managing smoke from a prescribed burn may be the most important aspect of the Prescribed Burn Plan. Smoke sensitive areas such as hospitals, airports, schools, roadways, and residential areas are all areas in which smoke management is crucial. Due to military training at Fort Bragg the impact of smoke from prescribed burning is extremely important. Because of smoke concerns, the installation has an extensive coordination and notification network that must be followed prior to conducting any burn. The installation also follows the North Carolina Division of Forestry Smoke Management Guidelines. If an agency plans to sustain their prescribed burning program they must manage the smoke that is generated from the fire.



*Caution signs are placed along roadways and residents are informed by a public address system.*

# Weather Effects on Prescribed Burning



*Fort Bragg : Forestry Office,  
910-396-9497*

information for on-site locations. Even with the most modern equipment the weather can be difficult to predict. For this reason, it is hard to schedule in advance what areas will be selected to burn on a given day. The Forestry Branch makes every effort to notify the public as far in advance as possible prior to conducting a prescribed burn operation. The RAWS monitor and collect site-specific weather information 24 hours a day-7 days a week. For obtaining fire weather information for the areas posted you are welcome to call the telephone numbers provided.

Only after obtaining and considering the most recent local weather forecasts provided by the National Weather Service is the decision to burn that day made. There are specific weather parameters that are required to safely conduct a prescribed fire operation. The professional burner also understands the desired weather needed to obtain the specific objectives of a particular burn.

Due to the influences weather has on prescribed burning, Fort Bragg has installed two Remote Automatic Weather Stations (RAWS). These weather observation stations provide specialized fire weather



*Camp Mackall: Fire Dept. Office,  
910-432-0131*



# Wildfire



There is an average of 250 wildfires annually on the reservation, burning approximately 11,500 acres. The major cause of wildfires on the installation are pyrotechnics used during military training. Most of these fires are not damaging due to the extensive prescribed burning program on the installation. The Forestry Branch incorporates a “Let Burn” policy which means the wildfire is contained and monitored as long as it is not determined to be damaging to timber or threatening life and/or property.



*Motorgrader cleaning firebreak for containment*



# Forestry Branch Fort Bragg, North Carolina



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